"For People Who Think"

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The Final Book

Some people reject God because they can find no evidence for Him which satisfies both their hearts and minds simultaneously. Then there are others who accept God on the basis of emotional or irrational reasons which satisfy their hearts, but leave their minds unsure. These two groups of people have never found a satisfying answer to the question of their relationship with God. Then there are yet others who have found the correct path which God intended for us: to accept Him and His message to us using our minds first and foremost, and the heart follows easily and naturally as a consequence.

Instead of searching for the answer, there are also some people who chose to simply brush the question aside and ignore it unfortunately. This is the easy way out of what appears to be a very difficult, mysterious question which may seem to have no final solution. Most of these people are unaware of a very powerful message which completely and unequivocally establishes the correct path to God. This message squares with both the mind and the heart, and it has no equal since it comes to us straight from God Himself.

The message comes in the form of a book. In fact, God has given us several Books of guidance through the years, but each one was ultimately corrupted and changed by dishonest people. Each Book essentially contained the same fundamental message as the previous Books. Mankind was expected to guard these Books from harm, but unfortunately failed to live up to this expectation. Slowly but surely, each Book was edited and tampered with, destroying its authenticity. This is partly why God kept sending us more revelations.

However, almost 1400 years ago, God sent us another Book with the same basic message as the earlier ones, but with a small but very important difference. This time, God decreed that this Book would be the last Book

sent down to us because God would protect it Himself. Regarding this Final Book, God said,

> ***"Behold, it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from on high this reminder: and behold, it is We who shall truly guard it" [Chapter 15, verse 9]***

Today, if we compare the 114 chapters in every copy of this Final Book with each other, we will find they match perfectly word for word - from the oldest copies made 1300-plus years ago to the ones printed just a few hours ago. No human hand has changed it.

The rational person has every right to be doubtful, of course, if he or she has never read this book. For such people, here is a small sample of what the Final Book contains. Suppose we wanted to ask God several questions about Him and about ourselves. Short of Him speaking to us directly (such a privilege has been granted to only one person out of all humanity), the Book has the best answers one can find. It is on the strength of these answers that an honest person may be struck with the conviction that the Final Book is from none other than God Almighty. Again, here is only a small part of the information one might find.

1. On The Nature of God

Who is God? God explains in His Final Book that it is quite simply impossible for us to completely understand Him. We cannot pinpoint a definition of the Creator,

> ***"Glory to the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth - the Sustainer, in almightiness enthroned - from all that they may attribute to Him by way of definition" [43:82]***

Our inability to completely understand God does not mean that He is completely remote from us. In spite of our limited understanding, we are all quite capable of turning to God, and He is not unaware of our efforts,

> ***"...and unto thy Sustainer turn with love." [94:8]***

> ***"Behold, for those who stand in awe of God although He is beyond the reach of their perception, there is forgiveness in store and a great reward" [67:12]***

God has not left mankind entirely in the dark regarding His Nature. He refers to Himself by approximately 100 names in various places throughout the Final Book. Each name is a descriptive attribute of God, and they are all meant to help us understand the Creator. To gain this understanding involves simply thinking about God and reflecting on His names, and this type of awareness is a central pillar of faith (i.e. when one actively remembers God and is conscious of Him). A second benefit of these names is that some of them provide mankind with ideals to try to attain. For example, since God is the Most Forgiving, Most Patient, and Most Knowledgeable, we should each strive to be forgiving, patient, and knowledgeable (educated in our case).

Of all His attributes, God emphasizes a single one above all others in His Final Book: that HE IS ONE. God is not two, three, four, or more beings. There is only one deity, and He is God,

> ***"Say: `He is God, Unique***
> ***God the Eternal, the Independent.***
> ***He begets not, and neither is He begotten.***
> ***And there is nothing that could be compared to Him.'" [112:1-4]***

In other places of the Final Book, God emphasizes His Greatness and the impossibility of fully grasping Him by using the plural sense of pronouns for Himself - but He is strictly One and Unique with no other partners or deities.

After this aspect of Unity, God chose to emphasize two of His other names more often than the rest in the Final Book: *"the Most Merciful, the One who acts Mercifully."* In fact, each chapter but one in the whole Book starts with, *"In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the One who Acts Mercifully."* These two names cannot be emphasized enough. They are meant to stress we should not let our sins keep us from coming back to God and calling to Him at all times, in joy or sadness. The Creator is more aware of our imperfections than we are, and so when we stumble and feel bad, God is far more likely to be kind than angry.

The Last Messenger and Prophet of God (i.e. the person whom God chose to deliver the Final Book to the rest of mankind) commented on God's mercy by informing us that,

> *"When God decreed the Creation He pledged Himself by writing in His book which is laid down with Him: `My mercy prevails over my wrath.'" - the Last Messenger*
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> *"God says: I am as My servant thinks I am. I am with Him when He makes mention of Me. If he makes mention of Me to himself, I make mention of him to Myself; and if he makes mention of Me in an assembly, I make mention of him in an assembly better than it. And if he draws near to Me a hand's span, I draw near to him an arm's length; and if he draws near to Me an arm's length, I draw near to him a fathom's length. And if he comes to Me walking, I go to him with speed." - the Last Messenger*

2. The Nature of Man

Who are we, and what makes us different from all other things? We are creations of God, along with the rest of the universe. We are human beings, all descendants of a common ancestry well known to most of us: Adam and Eve. Humanity, however, is distinct from the rest of the universe in a very fundamental way according to the Final Book,

> ***"Verily, We did offer the trust to the heavens and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up - for verily he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish." [33:72]***

Over the years, many scholars of the Book have tried to understand exactly what God meant by *"the trust"*. The most convincing argument (based on other parts of the Book, and on certain statements of the Last Messenger) is that it refers to our ability to make decisions both freely and intelligently. In other words, our uniqueness as human beings stems from two gifts given to us by God:

* our ability to freely choose between actions (good and evil)

* our ability to intelligently weigh and make those choices

The price of these gifts is a tremendous amount of responsibility on our part; the responsibility not to abuse our gifts by rejecting God or by hurting each other unnecessarily.

The blessings of these two gifts are immeasurable, especially when God reminds us that He could have decided things otherwise by depriving us of either gift,

> ***"Now had it been Our will [that men should not be able to discern between right and wrong], We could surely have deprived them of their sight, so that they would stray forever from the [right] way: for how could they have had insight [into what is true]? And had it been Our will [that they should not be free to choose between right and wrong], We could surely have transformed them [rooted] in their places, so that they would not be able to move forward, and***

could not turn back." [36:66-67]

However, God did NOT will this, and as a result we are blessed with will and reason. The Final Book clearly warns against abusing these blessings, either by neglecting ourselves when we don't think wisely, or by hurting others when we deny them the right to choose,

> ***"Verily, the vilest of all creatures in the sight of God are those deaf, those dumb ones who do not use their reason." [8:22]***

> ***"There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from error: hence he who rejects evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way: for God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." [2:256]***

In spite of mankind's free will and reason, God warns us in His Book always to remember that these gifts are limited after all. The Final Word lies with Him in all matters. However, this is not to say that men's destinies are arbitrary - not at all. We are able to make decisions that affect our lives, but at the same time, God is also making decisions about us and for us,

> ***"And had thy Sustainer so willed, all those who live on earth would surely have attained to faith, all of them: do you then think that you could compel people to believe, notwithstanding that no human being can ever attain to faith otherwise than by God's leave, and [that] it is He who lays the loathsome evil [of disbelief] upon those who will not use their reason." [10:99-100]***

> ***"...Verily, God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves..." [13:11]***

3. Free Will and Reason Applied

Has God given mankind a clear path to Him? In essence, every rational reader would like to know if they can trust the authenticity of the Final Book. It is perfectly natural to feel that way; after all, this is the outcome of our God-given gift of reason. However, our own skeptical minds are the keys here: the Final Book, according to God, is addressed to people who think, pure and simple,

> ***"...In this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who think." [39:42]***

> ***"Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people who use their reason." [30:28]***

No one but God can make a human being believe in the Truth of the Final Book, but that human being has to read it with an open mind, applying his or her powers of reason. The price of limited free will is that we must choose to be guided. Those people who do search for the Truth with an open mind and heart may find that the Final Book, while vast, is surprisingly clear,

> ***"Nay, but this [divine writ] consists of messages self-evident in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge - and none could knowingly reject Our messages unless it be such as would do wrong [to themselves]." [29:49]***

> ***"This divine writ - let there be no doubt about it - is a guidance for all the God-conscious..." [2:2]***

The guidance of the Final Book is available to anyone who goes in search of it,

"[O men!] We have now bestowed upon you from on high a divine writ containing all that you ought to bear in mind: will you not, then, use your reason?" [21:10]

One of the most interesting aspects of the authenticity of the Final Book is the quantity of scientifically accurate statements in it - on subjects not even dreamed of 1300 years ago. A sample of these includes the following:

- a large explosion marking the start of creation (Big Bang) [21:30]
- the initial smokey (nebulous) nature of the skies [41:11]
- the expansion of the universe [51:41]
- the presence of a huge amount of time before mankind appeared [76:1]
- the existence of sun and moon orbits [21;33]
- the finite sun and moon lifetimes [13:2]
- the final destination of the sun (Solar Apex) [36:38]
- the origin of all life based in water [21:30]

In fact, God states that the amazing beauty and intricacy of the natural world around us, as well as our own complex biological makeup, will ultimately lead us to Him as we grow in understanding,

"In time, We shall make them fully understand Our messages [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves, so that it will become clear unto them this [revelation] is indeed the truth. Is it not enough that thy Sustainer is witness unto everything?" [41:53]

4. The Presence of Evil

Why does God allow men and women to be hurt? There are some people who use the presence of suffering and evil in this world as grounds to lose hope and perhaps even to reject God. However, according to the Final Book, the limited free will and reason of human beings destroys that argument. We are responsible for what we do, and must bear the consequences - that is the liability or price of freedom. The evil that we do and suffer from is chosen by us and not by God,

"...God wills no wrong to His creation." [3:108]

However, God also guarantees us that aside from our own evil actions and their effects, God Himself will put us through some trials and tribulations here on earth - but the key is they will never be more than we can handle, and they may even be good for us,

"If misfortune touches you [know that] similar misfortune has touched [other] people as well; for it is by turns that We apportion unto men such days [of fortune and misfortune]: and [this] to the end that God might mark out those who have attained to faith, and choose from among you such as [with their lives] bear witness to the truth - since God does not love evildoers - and that God might render pure of all dross those who have attained to faith, and bring to nought those who deny the truth. Do you think that you could enter Paradise unless God takes cognizance of your having striven hard [in His cause], and takes cognizance of your being patient in adversity?" [3:140-142]

"God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favour shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does..." [2:286]

An integral part of our being aware of God is hope and patience in times of hardship. In fact, the loss of hope

is actually one of the symptoms of rejection of God,

> ***"[Prophet Abraham] exclaimed, `And who - other than those who have utterly lost their way - could ever abandon the hope of his Sustainer's grace?'" [15:56]***

The greatest source of hope is that God shall allow those people who accept Him to enter Paradise and, more importantly, to be close to Him. The Final Book contains many references on Paradise, and also on Hell, the destination of those people who knowingly reject God. Paradise is quite literally a place of indescribable joy, whereas Hell is its indescribable opposite (both places are given only partial descriptions in the Book). While the inhabitants of Paradise are permanent dwellers, the inmates of Hell are not necessarily imprisoned there forever; there are some who shall ultimately be freed,

> ***"[But] verily, as for those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds - the gardens of Paradise will be there to welcome them; therein will they abide, [and] never will they desire any change therefrom." [18:107-108]***
>
> ***"And whoever rebels against God and His Apostle and transgresses His bounds, him will He commit unto fire, therein to abide; and shameful suffering awaits him." [4:14]***
>
> *"There shall come out of Hell-fire he who has said `There is no deity except God' and who has in his heart goodness weighing a barley-corn; then there shall come out of Hell-fire he who has said `There is no deity except God' and who has in his heart goodness weighing a grain of wheat; then there shall come out of Hell-fire he who has said `There is no deity except God' and who has in his heart goodness weighing an atom." - the Last Messenger*

5. This Life and the Next

What is the end to men's lives? There are two parts to men's lives: the part here on earth, and the part in the Hereafter. The dividing line between the two is known as death, followed by the Day of Judgement or Resurrection. As far as death is concerned, everyone must go through it, but on Judgement Day people will be sorted out from each other into different categories,

> ***"Every human being is bound to taste death: but only on the Day of Resurrection will you be requited in full [for what you have done]..." [3:185]***

Resurrection Day will actually be a huge period of time (not a regular 24-hour day) in which every single human will be resurrected and judged by God on his or her beliefs and deeds. No human being - not even any Prophet - knows when this Day will come, for this is knowledge known only to God. The Final Book does describe it in several passages as a giant disaster on many scales (physical and ecological among others), and the Last Messenger was told of some of its foreshadowing signs which he communicated to us.

6. Messengers and Prophets

Who delivered God's Message to mankind? God has sent us many `reminders' of Him and of our obligations to Him over the centuries, culminating in the Final Book almost 1400 years ago. Every one of those `reminders' was delivered to us via a selected human being, one who was strong enough to deliver God's message to his people. These human beings are called the Prophets. They were not supernatural or immortal or different in any way from other human beings except that they were entrusted by God to speak in His Name,

"For [even] before thy time, [O Prophet], we never sent [as Our messengers] any but [mortal] men, whom We inspired - hence [tell the deniers of the truth] `If you do not know this, ask the followers of earlier revelation' - and neither did We endow them with bodies that ate no food, nor were they immortal." [21:7-8]

Some of the Prophets were allowed to perform supernatural miracles but only with God's permission (i.e. if He willed it). However, the Final Book stresses that every Prophet is no more than a servant of God - they do not have a share in His Divinity.

There is also a small group of Prophets who were also Messengers. Every Prophet has called his people to the Truth, but Messengers were additionally given a rejuvenated Message from God to convey. Every Messenger is a Prophet, but not every Prophet is a Messenger. There have been many Prophets, of which here are the names of a few mentioned in the Book: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Elijah, Elias, David, Solomon, Jonah, Job, Zacharias, John, Jesus, and, of course, the Last Messenger.

7. Eternal Salvation

Are certain people arbitrarily guaranteed the Favor of God, while others are excluded? The Mercy of God is not restricted arbitrarily to any one peoples. Everyone and anyone is free to accept the path to God using their own free will and reason,

"And they claim, `None shall ever enter Paradise unless he be a Jew' - or `a Christian'. Such are their wishful beliefs! Say [to them, O Prophet]: `Produce an evidence for what you are claiming, if what you say is true!' Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto God, and is a doer of good, shall have his reward with his Sustainer, and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve." [2:111-112]

The consequence of this is responsibility - everyone will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement. Some of us may be uncomfortable with this, but it is simply the price of freedom,

"It may not accord with your wishful thinking - nor with the wishful thinking of the followers of earlier revelation - [that] he who does evil shall be requited for it, and shall find none to protect him from God, and none to bring him succor, whereas anyone - be it man or woman - who does good deeds and is a believer, shall enter paradise, and shall not be wronged by as much as [would fill] the groove of a date-stone." [4:123-124]

8. Forgiveness of God

If we sin, what should we expect from God? If we subsequently feel guilty and repent after doing something evil, God wants us to expect Him to be forgiving, forgiving, and more forgiving. However, there is one sin which God will not forgive: worshipping anything besides Him (unless the person realizes his or her error and returns to worshipping the One God),

"Verily God does not forgive the ascribing of divinity to anything beside Him, although He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills: for he who ascribes divinity to anything beside God has indeed contrived an awesome sin." [4:48]

"Say, `O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God's Mercy: behold, God forgives all sins - for verily, He alone is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.'" [39:53]

Again, the most common phrase in the Final Book is *"In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the One who Acts Mercifully."*

The Last Messenger commented on God's forgiveness on many occasions as in the following case,

> *"God has said, `O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it [i.e. the earth]'". - the Last Messenger*

9. The Straight Way

What is the name for the way of life described in the Final Book? It is **Islam**, and it means "self-surrender [to God]". Any man or woman who accepts Islam is a **Muslim.** The Final Book is called the **Qur'an** (meaning "the Recitation"), and it is addressed to all of mankind in spite of being revealed in Arabic, the language of its Messenger and his people: **Muhammad bin Abd-Allah**. The life of the Prophet serves as the other base of Islam (the first being the Qur'an), and it is known as the **Sunnah**. Muhammad is the Last Prophet and Messenger of God as the Qur'an says,

> ***"[And know, O believers, that] Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is God's Apostle and the Seal of all the Prophets..." [33:40]***

And God has revealed to us His proper name, and it is **ALLAH**.

The Qur'an contains a great deal of guidance and information for anyone looking for final answers. The information given in this small essay is only the tip of the tip of the iceberg. There is no substitute for reading the Qur'an itself in its entirety - it is the closest we can come to having God speak to us directly and personally here on Earth. The Qur'an answers many questions which are commonly asked by today's men and women. Its scope is wide: from fundamental issues such as the nature of the Creator and mankind's limited free will and reason, to the more mundane such as marriage laws and whom to give charity to. Islam as described in the Qur'an is vastly and almost completely different than Islam as understood by most non-Muslims and even a few Muslims. The negative image of Islam today is an incredibly misleading deception. It is based on the moral weakness of some people who claim to be Muslims, and also on the unawareness of non-Muslims. Behind this image is the presence of a Truth which answers the fundamental questions we have, and which can reunite us with God. It is there for us to listen to, or to ignore.

And Allah Knows Best.

> ***"And [know that] We have not created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in mere idle play..." [21:16]***
>
> ***"Will they not, then, try to understand this Qur'an? Had it issued from any but God, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!" [4:82]***
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> ***"We did not bestow the Qur'an on thee from on high to make thee unhappy." [20:2]***
>
> ***"[O men!] We have now bestowed upon you from on high a divine writ containing all that you ought to bear in mind: will you not, then, use your reason?" [21:10]***

"...so remember Me, and I shall remember you; and be grateful to Me, and deny Me not." [2:152]

"Verily, those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds will the Most Gracious endow with love." [19:96]

"Say [O Prophet]: `If you love God, follow me, [and] God will love you and forgive you your sins; for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace.'" [3:31]

"Say: `If all the sea were ink for my Sustainer's words, the sea would indeed be exhausted ere my Sustainer's words are exhausted! And [thus it would be] if we were to add to it sea upon sea.'" [18:109]